



When activism may prove counterproductive: An exploratory study of anti-brand spoof advertising effects in the tobacco industry

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**WHEN ACTIVISM MAY PROVE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE:
AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF ANTI-BRAND SPOOF ADVERTISING EFFECTS
IN THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY**

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Abstract

First stage of research on the effects of anti-tobacco brand spoof ads on the consumer, this paper proposes an exploratory study of netnographic inspiration of the comments left on YouTube by individuals freshly exposed to anti-tobacco brand spoof ads. The results show that anti-tobacco brand spoof ads generate more positive emotions than negative emotions, particularly among non-smokers, and that individuals respond according to the source to which they attribute the ads (i.e., an activist, the tobacco industry or the government). The discussion of the results led to anticipate that anti-tobacco brand spoof ads could prove counterproductive...

Key words: spoof advertising, anti-tobacco activism, persuasion, netnography

**QUAND L'ACTIVISME PEUT S'AVERER CONTREPRODUCTIF :
UNE ETUDE EXPLORATOIRE DES EFFETS DE LA PUBLICITE PARODIQUE
DANS LE SECTEUR DU TABAC**

Résumé

Première étape d'une recherche portant sur les effets de la publicité parodique anti-tabac sur le consommateur, cet article propose une étude exploratoire d'inspiration netnographique des commentaires laissés sur YouTube par des internautes fraîchement exposés à une publicité parodique anti-tabac. Les résultats montrent que la publicité parodique anti-tabac suscite plus d'émotions positives que d'émotions négatives, notamment chez les non-fumeurs, et que les individus y réagissent suivant la source à laquelle ils l'attribuent (i.e., un activiste, l'industrie du tabac ou le gouvernement). La discussion des résultats conduit à anticiper que la publicité parodique anti-tabac pourrait s'avérer contreproductive...

Mots-clés : publicité parodique, activisme anti-tabac, persuasion publicitaire, netnographie

INTRODUCTION

According to the World Health Organization, tobacco use kills 5.4 million people a year – an average of one person every six seconds – and accounts for one in 10 adult deaths worldwide (see <https://www.who.int/topics/tobacco/facts>). Cigarette consumption is then a major cause of premature death worldwide. As a result, many government agencies are taking initiatives to keep young adults away from cigarettes consumption. At a national level, France has recently implemented a European Union directive requiring the display of shocking images on tobacco packs and is now considering the removal of any brand names and logos from those packs (*Le Monde*, 11/08/2010). At a supra-national level, the World Health Organization has proposed the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2003 to guide countries in developing targeted effective tools for tobacco control policies (Gallopel-Morvan et al., 2010). In the same attempt to reduce the number of smokers, nonprofit groups appear very active as well. Using proactive and creative alternative methods to warn people, such as anti-brand web-sites (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009) or anti-brand spoof ads (Berthon et al., 2008), they may well get round problems of overexposure and weariness of tired traditional anti-tobacco messages (Gallopel et al., 2006; Gallopel-Morvan et al., 2010). So far little research has been conducted on anti-brand communication and we know very little on consumers' response to anti-brand communication. In this paper, we put the focus on the effects of anti-tobacco brand spoof advertising.

From a general point of view, anti-brand spoof ads can be thought of as hijack actions on official brand ads, mixing part of those ads' official materials (e.g., logo, slogan, picture, style) with new ones in a ironical or sarcastic way in order to make the original ad ridiculous or distasteful. These ads range from poking harmless fun to malicious and spiteful jibes directed at some of the world's best known brands (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2006; Bal et al., 2009).

While those kinds of parodies were previously the prerogatives of professionals, today, anyone with a computer, a little sense of inventiveness and a statement to make can craft a professional looking anti-brand spoof advertising, strongly resembling in form to the ads of the products and brands they criticize (Berthon et al., 2008; Bal et al., 2009). Besides, the Internet has empowered ordinary consumers and nonprofit groups by giving them powerful means to express their views effectively and tools to reach a large targeted audience at will. Easier to make thanks to inexpensive media software, spoof ads are then as well easier to

spread through the Internet and its vehicles (e.g., YouTube, Facebook, DailyMotion). Therefore, negative parodies are becoming increasingly common on line (Bal et al., 2009; Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009), especially for tobacco brands, which appear among the most spoofed brands worldwide along with alcohol, computer and clothing brands (Harvest Communications LLC, 2002). As an illustration, anti-brand activists have for instance launched Adbusters, a website (<http://www.adbusters.org>) on which appears Joe Chemo, the Joe Camel mascot in his retirement years and suffering from lung cancer.

Spoofing tobacco brands on line, activists' focus is clearly on questioning negative advertising's impact on a consumption-driven society. In the short term, they aim at countering the effects of official tobacco brands advertising and warning people against tobacco dangers. In the long term, their objective is to affect individual cigarettes consumption. However, to our knowledge, few academic studies have already been conducted on anti-brand spoof ads effectiveness. While research has recently begun to address the question of spoof ads effects, it has mainly focused on consumer-created communications undertaken by brand loyalists on behalf of the brand (Muñiz and Schau, 2007) and left anti-brand spoof ads unexplored (Berthon et al., 2008). It is therefore now important for both anti-brand activists who create and spread anti-brand spoof ads, and the researchers who study them, to understand their effects.

Clearly, anti-tobacco brand spoof ads do not target a specific brand, such as Marlboro or Camel, but the tobacco industry that this prominent brand symbolizes (Harvest Communications LLC, 2002). However, they could still have an impact on both the tobacco category and the tobacco brand they target. Therefore, it is highly relevant to question whether anti-tobacco spoof ads actually hurt tobacco consumption and tobacco brands images, as these variables have largely been shown to influence tobacco consumption behaviors and intentions as a means of self-expression (Belk et al., 1982; Solomon, 1983; Pollay and Lavack, 1993; Pechmann and Rathneshwar, 1994; Pechmann and Knight, 2002; Golmier et al., 2007).

In the present paper, our specific objective is purely exploratory. Considering anti-tobacco brand spoof ads as kind of consumer-created spoof ads dedicated to warn people against smoking health risks, we first review the literature on cigarette warnings effects and on consumer-created spoof ads. This review highlights some inconsistent findings and the need to consider an exploratory phase, which we did through a netnographic study of spoof ads-

induced comments left on YouTube by subjects. Finally, we discuss the results of our exploratory study and suggest that as anti-tobacco spoof ads use humor instead of fear-appeal messages (as anti-smoking warning labels do), they may foster persuasion in a peripheral way (Petty and Cacciopo, 1986; Zhang, 1996) and get a result opposite to activists' intent.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Spoofs ads can be classified according to two main criteria: their valence (i.e., positive, neutral or negative) and their source (i.e., the brand itself, its competitors, brands in other categories, ordinary individuals wishing to express their personal creativity or activists, including unsatisfied customers and employees) (see Appendix A1 for examples). In this typology, anti-tobacco brand spoof ads are a specific type of spoof ads, negatively valenced and designed by activists to warn consumers against tobacco consumption dangers. As such, anti-tobacco brand spoof ads fall between cigarette warnings and consumer-created spoof ads. Therefore, they invite us to focus our literature review on these two main subjects.

Cigarette warnings effects

The health warnings, mandated by several governments to educate people about the risks of smoking, are usually printed on cigarette advertisements and on cigarette packages. Following the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986), two main routes have been described in the literature to explain how they may counter the mechanisms which lead young people to start smoking: an emotional one and a cognitive one (Gallopel-Morvan et al., 2010).

The emotional route asserts that an increase in the negative emotions experienced by the individual exposed to cigarettes warnings (e.g., fear, anxiety, disgust) result in an increase in the persuasiveness of these warnings (Rogers, 1985). More concretely, fear appeals have been shown to have a positive impact on behaviors such as quitting, attempting to quit or reducing smoking, and on behavioral intentions such as intentions to quit, not to start or re-start (Laroche et al., 2001; Hammond et al., 2004; Gallopel-Morvan et al., 2010). However, many researchers pointed out that moderate fear appeals may be more persuasive than weak or strong fear appeals. Since weak appeals create too little tension and strong appeals create too much tension, the effect of fear appeals on persuasion could be represented by an inverted U-shaped curve indicating moderate fear levels to be optimal (Tanner et al., 1991).

The cognitive route provides an alternative explanation for the process through which warning messages influence adaptive behavior. Using this route, the Protection Motivation Model (Rogers, 1975) posits that the influence of fear on the way consumers chose to cope with a threat is mediated by two main cognitive processes: first the appraisal of the threat severity and probability and, second, the appraisal of the ability of a coping behavior to remove the threat and of one's ability to carry out this coping behavior. The outcome of these appraisal processes is an intermediate state called "protection motivation". The Health Belief Model offers a similar framework (Rosenstock, 1974) and predicts that consumers will be more likely to avoid risky behaviors as long as they understand the severity of the risks, their susceptibility to those risks and the benefits of the advocated behavior, and as long as they do not perceive any behavioral barriers. However, the most important limitation to the relevance of these risk-learning models lies in the fact that smoking behavior may appear to some consumers as more rewarding than risky. Actually, many consumers, among whom teenagers and young adults, consider smoking behaviors as a means of achieving group belonging or feeling mature, more confident, in control and cool – all desirable traits (Devlin et al., 2007).

Some variables have been identified to moderate the effect of cigarette warnings. Among them are individual variables and cigarette warnings characteristics. As far as the individual variables are concerned, Laroche and colleagues (2001) have explored the effects of cultural differences between the Anglo-Canadians and Chinese on their reactions to fear appeals in cigarette warnings. They showed that both physical and social threat appeals had a much greater effect on the Anglo subjects than on the Chinese. Regarding the cigarette warnings characteristics are concerned, Gallopel and colleagues (2006) conclude that "*warnings should be crasher, targeted, shorter, clearer, and more involving for smokers*". In particular, their format – whether warnings are only verbal ones or include both words and pictures – has been shown to explain the degree to which they affect beliefs about the negative health consequences of smoking and decrease the persuasiveness of advertisements. Actually, text-only or black-and-white warnings (such as those issued by the Surgeon General) are not as effective as graphic warnings to compete with imagery of tobacco ads, such as those showing the Marlboro Man (Krugman et al., 1999). As they are more visible and easier to understand, graphic warnings increase awareness and knowledge of the health hazards of smoking (Hammond et al., 2006; O'Hegarty et al., 2007). Further than the cognitive dimension of attitudes toward smoking, graphic warnings often use highly dramatic appeals and generate stronger negative feelings. Beyond warnings format, warnings themes affect strongly their

effectiveness, with physical (e.g., cancers) and social (e.g., dangers of second-hand smoke, especially for children) messages being the most effective warnings (Gallopel et al., 2006; Gallopel-Morvan et al., 2010). Finally, warnings perceived credibility is the last important variable to explain warnings effectiveness as non credible message can be avoided by smokers (Gallopel et al., 2006).

Consumer-created spoof ads effects

Research on consumer-created spoof ads is still scarce. To date, academics have mainly pointed out that spoof ads are highly relevant to advertisers and brand managers as they provide evidence of consumers' perceptions of brands and of the vividness of consumers' attachment or despite to those brands (Thompson et al., 2006; Muniz and Schau, 2007). Though, academics have only recently begun to address the question of spoof ads effects, a cognitive and an emotional route seem to be relevant to explain spoof ads effects.

On the cognitive route, when creating spoof ads for the brands they love or just to express their personal creativity, consumers often show a strong level of agility in appropriating advertising and branding conventions. Celebrating brands ads, these consumers share the messages brands want to convey with other consumers, which contributes to continuously revitalize their brands (Muniz and Schau, 2007). Sometimes, they can even create new meanings to protect their brands from the competition, better reflect their experience of them or imbue them with the meanings they would like to attach to them (Muniz and Schau, 2007). In the end, these kinds of positive or neutral spoof ads could be as effective as brands official ones in building brands image. What's more, they could be as effective as brands official ones in encouraging the product consumption. As an example in the tobacco industry, cigarettes advertising have been found to be very efficient (Botvin et al., 1993; Pucci and Siegel, 1999), particularly among adolescents who are wrought with self-conflict and thus more susceptible to the influence from cigarette advertising because these ads portray cigarettes as providing self-identity-relevant and social benefits (Freeman et al., 2009). Specifically, by the association of positive images with the act of smoking, presenting an image of smokers as physically attractive and healthy individuals, displayed in exquisite settings or engaged in exciting activities, positive or neutral spoof ads could run counter to messages that smoking is dangerous to one's health (Altman et al., 1987; Loken and Howard-Pitney, 1988) and reinforce perceptions that smoking is a normative consumption product (Collins et al., 1987;

Aloise-Young et al., 1994). Two theories have been particularly relevant to explain cigarette advertising persuasion processes. The Social Learning Theory (also named Social Cognitive Theory) suggests that subjects adopt the behavior to receive the social rewards portrayed in the ads (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Aloise-Young et al., 1994; Hawkins and Hane, 2000; Aloise-Young et al., 2006). The Stereotype Priming Theory posits that recurrent exposure to cigarette ads makes salient positive stereotypical beliefs about smoking and generates more favorable thoughts about and less disapproving judgments of smokers (Anderson et al., 1990; Maheswaran, 1994; Pechmann, 2001; Pechmann and Knight, 2002). As they explain cigarette advertising effects, the Social Learning and Stereotype Priming theories lead to imagine that neutral or positive spoof ads for cigarettes brands are likely to encourage smoking.

On the contrary, when spoofing communication to express their dissent, consumers highlight the negative aspects of a product or a brand, as warnings would do. On the side of the product, they associate negative images with the product consumption, which could therefore discourage its consumption according if we apply the Social Learning and Stereotype Priming theories previously mentioned. On the side of the brand, they create a “Doppelgänger Brand Image” that is “a family of disparaging images about a brand that are circulated in popular culture and that are able over time to coalesce into a coherent set of opposing meanings that plague brand” (Thompson et al., 2006). In the end, this diffuse image is likely to lead to brand avoidance (Thompson et al., 2006), change in consumers’ attitudes and behaviors and a drop in brand value (Krishnamurthy and Kucuk, 2009).

On the emotional route, spoof ads are supposed to make laugh, even when they are created to have a specific effect on a targeted audience and not just for fun or for self-promotion (Berthon et al., 2008). From the literature of satire and caricature, Bal and colleagues (2009) identify three necessary characteristics for a spoof to work and make laugh in the field of politics: sympathy (i.e., the audience has to sympathize with the object of caricature), gap (i.e., there should be a disparity between the image and the reality of the object of caricature) and differentiation (i.e., the object of caricature has to be distinctive). Then, generating humor, spoof ads can overcome resistance to persuasion as humor enhances ad attention and memorability under conditions of low humor-expectancy (Duncan, 1979; Kellaris and Cline, 2007; Strick et al., 2009c), as well as product attitude and behavioral preference by a distraction effect and mere association (Strick et al., 2009a and b).

Lessons and limits of past research to predict anti-tobacco brand spoof ads effects

While no empirical research has been conducted on the effects of anti-brand spoofs ads in the tobacco industry, the interesting results underlined by past research conducted on cigarette warnings and consumer-created spoof ads may help building a conceptual framework to explain these effects. To begin, such a framework should study their influence on images at two specific levels: at the brand's level and at the product's level. Then, such a framework should integer two routes to persuasion as in the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986): a cognitive one and an emotional one. Still anti-tobacco brand spoof ads influence remains unclear on several points.

First, anti-tobacco brand spoof ads may generate ambivalent emotions: negative ones because of the presence of a health message and positive ones because of this message hijacking. Research does not identify these emotions precisely and does not say which emotions are dominant in consumers' responses to this kind of spoof.

Second, from a cognitive point of view, message credibility is an important variable in message elaboration but we do not know how consumers perceive anti-tobacco brand spoof ads. More precisely, to whom do they attribute this kind of messages and what credibility do they associate to them?

Third, anti-tobacco brand spoof ads target young adults, when past research on warnings has usually focus on adolescent, considering that cigarette advertising in magazines specifically targets youth readers (Pucci and Siegel, 1999). To date, no research has provided evidence that the fear appeal route could be found among young adults, though they are among the heaviest consumers of tobacco products. For instance, in France, 45.6% of people aged between 20 and 25 smoke (INPES, Baromètre Santé 2005).

Our general goal is to broaden the scope of past research on anti-tobacco warnings by extending it into the new substantive area of spoof ads, but before building a strong conceptual framework to explain anti-tobacco brand spoof ads effects, finding answers to these questions seems essential. For this reason, the present research is exploratory and aims more specifically at identifying the nature of feelings and thoughts exhibited by consumers when exposed to anti-tobacco brand spoof ads. As such, it is the first piece of a larger program of research interested in consumers' emotional and cognitive responses to anti-tobacco brand spoof ads and, in the end, in anti-tobacco brand spoof ads effectiveness.

METHODOLOGY

We used netnography and collected qualitative material under the form of comments posted by Internet users on a social networking Website. Netnography allows observing real processes and patterns of behavior through the observation and/or participation in communications on publicly available online forums (Nelson and Otnes, 2005).

The Website where we picked up comments was YouTube, a video sharing Website on which users can view, share and comment videos. The choice of YouTube was based on its worldwide use. By July 2006, 100 millions videos were being watched every day, and 65.000 videos added daily. Moreover, 10% of ads on YouTube are actually spoof ads (Berthon et al., 2008). In order to obtain spoof-induced comments and emotions as diverse as possible, we also first considered using DailyMotion to pick-up comments of Internet users. However, this Website has been found to propose only four spoof ads, viewed by only 1.410 individuals and receiving not even a single comment. DailyMotion was eventually not considered.

We used “anti-smoking spoof” as a key word to select comments related to anti-tobacco brand spoof ads. We picked up comments only for spoof ads viewed by a large number of individuals in order to maximize the number of comments. Only spoof ads viewed more than 3.000 times were selected, representing 12 videos. These 12 videos totalized around 1.200 comments, composed of more than 20.000 words and producing 73 pages of text. This diversity of spoof ads and comments enabled us to accumulate narratives from respondents with a broad range of opinions and emotions elicited by the spoofs. When identifying emotions in comments of spoof ads posted on YouTube, two major hurdles appeared.

The first hurdle was to exclude narratives describing emotions induced not by the spoof but by a preceding comment. Consequently, two coders analyzed the comments to retain only those that were directly linked to spoof exposure. We deleted 21 pages of comments, cutting down the number of pages to 52 pages.

The second hurdle, which has been mentioned in previous netnographic studies (Wolf, 2000; Kozinets, 2006; Kozinets, 2010), was to deal with a great body of various minimalist punctuation marks used to express emotions online, such as acronyms (like “LOL” or “OMG”, terms such as “friending” or “flaming”) and emotional icons (emoticons or smiley faces such as “;-)” or “:-()” in the comments). The same two coders were previously provided

with operational definitions and detailed rules and procedures to follow for coding smileys. More specifically, coders were invited to read instructions on two particular Websites¹ designed to help Web users interpreting such punctuation marks. This allowed coders to translate acronyms and emoticons in words to further categorize them into emotions. This was particularly helpful since for instance 147 acronyms or emoticons (18% of the whole set of words) were referring to laughing.

RESULTS

As our exploratory study aims at exploring the consumers' response to anti-tobacco brand spoof ads, the qualitative corpus collected was analyzed in this regard. The presentation of the results of this analysis distinguishes between consumers' emotional and cognitive responses.

Emotional responses induced by anti-tobacco brand spoof ads exposure

When interpreting this body of qualitative data, our aim was to identify the most recurrent and robust patterns of emotions elicited by anti-tobacco brand spoof ads exposure. In the whole set of comments, 813 words were related to emotions.

Since words describing upbeat feelings were of great diversity, only the two main dimensions of finding the spoof funny and laughing are presented in Table 1 but readers can refer to Appendix A2 to get more details about the words found by the two coders in the comments from YouTube. Among words referring to finding the spoof funny, coders took care at keeping in the analysis the word "like" only if this one clearly referred to the fact of liking the spoof.

¹http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_emoticons;
<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20060814020411AAwouFx>.

Table 1 - Frequency of the types of emotions elicited by spoof ads

Emotion after spoof exposure	Occurrence of the word	Frequency (%) of the word	Cumulated frequency (%) of the emotion
Upbeat feelings			
Funny	370	45,51	86,7
Laugh	335	41,21	
Contempt			
Stupid	22	2,71	8,2
Bad	17	2,09	
Hate	16	1,97	
Bullshit	4	0,49	
Dumb	4	0,49	
Annoying	2	0,25	
Suck	2	0,25	
Surprise			
Omg (Oh my God !)	14	1,72	3,8
Crazy	11	1,35	
Amazing	6	0,74	
Fear			
Freaking	3	0,37	1,2
Sad	3	0,37	
Creepy	2	0,25	
Death	2	0,25	
Total	813	100	100

The results presented in Table 1 show that positive emotions were by far the most recurrent set of emotions in the comments studied. 86% of the emotions described in the comments referred to experiencing fun and laughing, two components of upbeat feelings (Mooradian, 1996). The other sets of emotions referred either to negative feelings (i.e., dislike and fear) or to neutral emotions (i.e., surprise). Surprise, a neutral emotion, represented 3.8% of the words. Less than 10 % of the words were describing negative emotions: 8.2% of for “disliking” emotions, 1.2% refers to fear, making fear the least represented emotion among the four emotions identified in this qualitative analysis.

Some of the negative reactions generated by anti-tobacco spoof ads exposure are linked to the fact that the moral message conveyed by spoof ads infringes smokers’ rights to decide on their own what they should do or not do. This appears in smokers’ and non-smokers’ verbatim:

“These smoking commercials get more and more retarded every time they make one! Let us smoke in peace dammit!”

“Truth ads are some of the most annoying ads ever....and I don't even smoke! The principle of the thing is even more annoying: A perfect stranger is chastising a person's life choice. As long as the person keeps their habit to themselves or does it in places where people accept the risks, then it's all kool and the gang.”

“Personally I dont smoke and can’t stand to be near one but its there choice and I could careless. I hate them truth commercials. It’s all about their rights. They know what there doing and long term as well. So why put out an commercial to stop them?”

These negative reactions may lead to a rebellious attitude and to health message avoidance, which is particularly true among smokers:

“I started smoking because those truth commercials pissed me off haha.”

“Yay! I hate those fucking truth ads, all they do is make me wanna light another cigarette, and truthfully, I only have four left.”

“I enjoy thinking about anti-tobacco ads while taking long, thoughtful drags on my cigarette” (ironically)

Despite these negative reactions (less than 10 percents), most of the comments collected on YouTube suggest a very positive attitude toward spoof ads, seemingly driven by strong upbeat feelings (more than 86 percents), especially among non-smokers.

Cognitive responses induced by anti-tobacco brand spoof ads exposure

In addition to the identification of upbeat feelings, dislike, surprise and fear as emotions induced by spoof exposure, these comments also highlight the fact that individuals exposed to spoof ads widely engaged in debates and questions regarding the source of the spoof. People did not agree on whom to attribute the creation of the spoof to.

Some individuals thought the spoof was a real ad, either created by a cigarette manufacturer:

“Hooray! Someone finally lays this out as actual truth.”

“You know what I never understood about these commercials, is how exactly do tobacco companies mislead people? It says on every damn pack of cigarettes; Surgeon General's Warning Smoking Causes Lung Cancer, Heart Disease, and Emphysema. I mean how much clearer can you be?”

... or by the tobacco industry itself:

“Actually, it is a tobacco sponsored program. Funny, though, how the ads don't mention any of that. Equally funny how they also lack citations toward their claims of tobacco companies.”

Other people, though clearly noticing that the spoof was not a usual ad, attribute the spoof to a government sponsored program. Prior research has emphasized the great involvement of governments in the fight against the dangers of smoking. The principal method used by the government to educate consumers about the risks of smoking refers to warnings (Loken and Howard-Pitney, 1988). Other governmental actions aim at making illegal the targeting of youth by tobacco companies' promotional campaigns, outdoor and transit advertising, cartoons as a marketing feature, product placement in the media, and merchandising (Krugman et al., 1999). Thus, it is not surprising to find comments suggesting that spoofs are believed to be a governmental initiative:

"This is fake. Truth, what a joke. Probably another government sponsored program. I haven't seen one of their ads yet that were any good."

Finally, the last ones thought spoof ads they were exposed to had been designed by anti-smoking activists and clearly identified the fake aspect of the spoof and the fact that it was not a real ad from any brand or any government program, but rather a copy of an existing ad made by an individual or by an activist:

"First of all, this isn't a truth commercial. Someone copied a truth commercial and tried to make it seem real. It isn't. This one sucks. If you notice, in a real true commercial they never chastise people for smoking. They point out the effects of smoking and the crazy things tobacco execs say or do."

"That is funny! Nice job! It's called a spoof, people. Why wouldn't you post that on youtube??? This is not a "true" commercial!"

"Spoof. It's a spoof. Stop arguing and take it for what it is... a spoof."

"Dude! That's not a real Truth ad. Every Truth ad I've seen has a lowercase "t" at the beginning of the word. This is so fake. Why in the world would a company trying to help people make a commercial with profanity and murder? This is so fake."

"I hate those 'truth' ads too. This parody video was great. Worth watching..."

Three perceived sources of the spoof can be identified: individuals and activists, a tobacco brand or the tobacco industry and the government. What's more, the last excerpts exemplify that the message seems to get a better reaction when it is attributed to an individual just wishing to make laugh rather than a government program.

DISCUSSION

Our qualitative analysis of individual comments posted on YouTube following anti-tobacco brand spoof ads exposure brings about three important results. First, the main spoof-induced emotions are upbeat feelings. Negative emotions such as dislike and fear represent a minor part of the induced emotions, especially compared to upbeat feelings. Surprise is also an emotion quite poorly represented. Second, some people misunderstand the nature of the spoof. Some see it as a brand-initiated fake humoristic ad, others see it as a campaign from the tobacco industry, or by the government. Third, spoof-induced response depends on the perceived source of the spoof and on consumer's involvement in tobacco consumption. These results invite to discuss several points about anti-tobacco brand spoof ads effectiveness.

First, what might be the effect of anti-tobacco brand spoof ads on cigarette consumption image? As they generate more humor than fear to persuade consumers to adopt an anti-smoking behavior, it is unlikely that the fear-appeal route could fully explain spoof ads effects as it explains warning labels effects on consumers. Precisely, humor could distract consumers from the elaboration of the health message. Then anti-tobacco brand spoof ads would be less effective than traditional cigarette warnings to discourage smoking, even though they use an innovative form of communication. About the question of their effectiveness compared to the absence of any anti-tobacco communication, anti-tobacco spoof ads prime some of the negative consequences of the product consumption, like physical and social risks. Therefore, following the Protection Motivation (Rogers, 1975) and the Health Belief (Rosenstock, 1974) models, consumers exposed to anti-tobacco brand spoof ads should perceive more risks associated with smoking. However, we do not know whether, and in what circumstances, humor distraction effect eliminates or only reduces spoof ads influence on smoking beliefs saliency.

Second, what might be the effect of anti-tobacco brand spoof ads on cigarette brand image? On the one hand, these spoof ads associate the brands with negative health drawbacks. Actually, they have been created by individuals who aim at disparaging the image of tobacco consumption. Doing so, they may erode all tobacco brands image. But on the other hand, they prime the targeted brand identity codes, which could make them more salient in consumers' mind, with a positive contribution to image building for this specific brand. Actually, Spotts and colleagues (1997) show that the use of humor in ads for what they call "yellow" products, such as cigarettes, can be very effective in enhancing initial attention, aided brand recall and

held attention. They contend that, consumers would spend little time seeking information and concentrating on the advertising about them since cigarettes are consumed for self-gratification. What's more, as they really make consumers laugh, they could lead to an affective transfer (Zajonc, 1968, 1980) and to an enhanced preference for the targeted brand. Would that be the case, the targeted brand would paradoxically benefit from the spoof campaign, which is not part of activists' goals. To explore this question, it would be particularly interesting to distinguish between functional and symbolic brand associations when studying the effects of anti-tobacco brand spoof ads, and to explore their influence at the level of the targeted brand and at the level of its competitors.

Third, consumers' reactions to the spoof seem to depend on the smoking status of subjects, actual smokers eliciting more negative emotions and attitudes than non-smokers. This result is not surprising as prior research conducted on tobacco advertising has showed that effects to anti-smoking advertising largely depend on consumption status. For instance, smokers tend to avoid dissonant information about their smoking behavior (Tagliacozzo, 1981), leading them to avoid exposure to dissonant information, such as anti-tobacco campaigns. In addition to this selective exposure, they exhibit less acceptance of antismoking information than do non-smokers, and they are more resistant to changing their beliefs (Loken and Howard-Pitney, 1988). Thus spoof ads may be less efficient in changing smokers' beliefs on smoking than non-smokers' beliefs. Besides, according to the ELM (Petty and Cacioppo, 1986; Zhang, 1996), non-smokers, who are less involved, are likely to process spoof under limited elaboration and pay more attention to the peripheral cues (i.e., humor) of spoofs than to the relevant arguments of the message. Therefore, their response should be more driven by a positive emotion than by the elaboration of the health message. In that case, their beliefs on smoking would not change, but their image of the targeted brand may be enhanced. On the whole, activists' efforts invested to spoof tobacco brand ads might be counterproductive.

Fourth, one of the important variables of the relative influence of the two routes seems to lay in the source the spoof ads can be attributed to. Actually, spoof ads generate less humor if they are attributed to a government program. Also, they could generate more elaboration in that case as governmental warnings should be perceived as more credible. For this reason, the perceived source of the spoof should as well be included in the model to be build to understand spoof ads effects.

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Appendix A1. A typology of spoof advertising

Regarding the valence, positive or neutral spoofs refer to parodies which spread a rather positive image of the brand appearing in the spoof. For instance, the spoofs created by brands such as Chupa Chups or Burger King using such icons as the macho imagery of the Marlboro cowboy can be seen as positively valenced since they do not disparage the image of the spoofed brand, that is Marlboro.



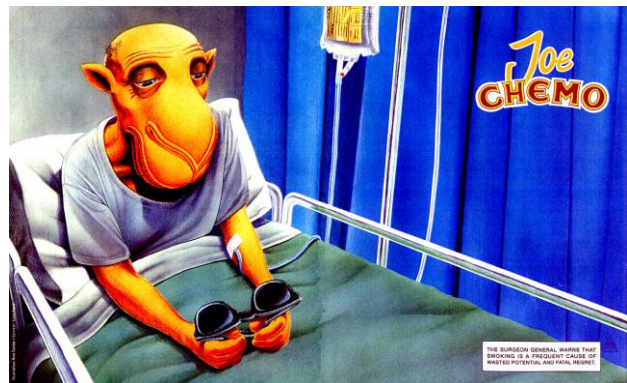
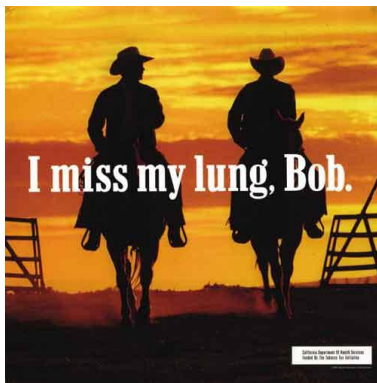
On the contrary, spoofs that deliberately hijack logos are negatively valenced since they disparage the image of the brand through the use of slogans that ridicule the name and spread negative meanings of the brand.



Regarding the source of the spoof, ridiculing spoofs can be initiated by competitors (see the example of Apple featuring Microsoft as a chubby, ineffectual geek, cited by Bal et al., 2009) or brands from other categories (see Chupa Chups or Burger King). More surprisingly, brands can decide to spoof themselves. They use humor to promote a cool image to a wide online target and through an inexpensive way. For example, the Pot Noodle company has created its own spoof ad to attract young audience and develop a positive image. Such strategies can be effective since this spoof ad has been viewed more than 238,530 views only two weeks after its launch on YouTube (Long, 2008). Similarly with a self-spoofing ad by MasterCard featuring the cartoon character Homer Simpsons aired on the occasion of the football world cup.



However, most spoofs ads are anti-brand oriented, designed by consumers, detractors or activists, especially in the tobacco industry as illustrated by the following parodies of Marlboro and Camel ads.



Appendix A2. Words referring to funny and laugh as components of upbeat feelings

Funny	N	Laugh	N
Funny, fun, funny, funnier	92	Haha (*)	133
Like	89	Lol, lolz	115
Love, loved, luv	56	Hilarious, hilarious, hilarious, hilarity	32
Great, greatest	41	Lmao, lmfaoo, lmfaooo, lmaoo	32
Nice	33	Laugh, laughed, laughing	23
Awesome, aw, awesome, awesomiest	23		
Cool, coolest	27		
Enjoy, enjoying	9		
Total	370		335

* All words that are combinations of “h” and “a” have been aggregated.